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BROWN

By  
ONE OF HER  
SUBJECTS

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**BETTINA BROWN**



100.  
at

BETTINA BROWN

A LITTLE CHILD

BY

ONE OF HER SUBJECTS, *i.e.*

Benjamin Johnson.

"Nature will take care of you. . . . Nature is  
up in the sky. . . . It takes care of cuts and  
stings and bruises and flowers. . . ."

—*Bettina Brown*

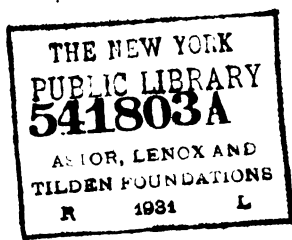
NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & CO.

681 FIFTH AVENUE

KES.





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**Printed in the United States of America**

*To  
Those whose  
Hearts  
Have not grown  
Hard,  
And who joy to watch a  
Blossom  
Turn into a  
Flower*

*Heaton 15 May 1931*



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**BETTINA BROWN**



# BETTINA BROWN

## I

### TO-DAY

**M**ISS BETTINA BROWN is an eager, calm, rude, polite, buoyant-hearted little girl. She loves life—she loves laughter.

Her spirit has bloomed unshadowed by gloomy creeds or enforced prayer. The “sultry sameness” of the Puritan’s sabbath has not darkened her glad life. She knows by heart the acts of Tom Sawyer and of Gulliver the Traveller,—not the Acts



## Bettina Brown

of the Apostles. She prefers Robert Louis Stevenson to Moses.

She is a stranger to fear,—yet scorns to hurt the helpless, offend the unfortunate, bruise a flower or tell a lie.

Like Dr. Brown's Marjorie Fleming, it is not alone Betty's "warm intelligence" that makes her an interesting study to those who love children, but it is the similar "fervour, the sweetness, the flush of poetic ecstasy, the lovely and glowing eye,"—the same "passion for Nature,—for all living things." Her love for flowers is not a mere liking for what is pleasingly decorative. It is a warm, personal love for each bloom, no matter how humble,—giving it such love as another child might bestow on a living pet. There is a tender fingering, a

## To-Day

kiss for each blossom, be it a rose or a dandelion. It is hard to get her past a clover-patch.

She loves what most people regard as ugly,—snails, crabs, turtles, tadpoles. Shells fascinate her. She adores white stones, and patiently collects them when we are out walking. Some day, months later, when travelling, I find a round white stone in the pocket of some garment. It is a little message from Bettina.

This sketch has no sad ending, no climax of the "soft silken primrose, fading timelessly." The only tragedy is that the first golden epoch of Bettina's life is fading into the grey mists of memory. A tranquil path, vibrant with bird-calls and soft cadences, is changing to a road paved

## Bettina Brown

with school books and examination papers. We, who have shepherded those eager feet, hear now the sturdy trudging of rainy-day boots, or the nimble click of dancing pumps.

So we pause awhile to muse over the discarded baby shoes.

## II

### NINE YEARS AGO

**I**N the rose-bearing month of June and in the erudite city of Boston, Bettina dawned upon her little world. The time and place of her birth may explain in some measure her subsequent love of roses and learning,—her gracious attitude toward the wingèd bird and the wingèd word.

A bewhiskered physician comes to say that "All's well" and that the little visitor is "a wonder,—a darling." I am skeptical regarding this professional enthusiasm. My long-established opinion of babies is an unfat-

## Bettina Brown

vourable one, and I am nervous and resigned rather than jubilant. I await our first meeting with fear and distrust.

When the audience-hour finally arrives, I find it, to my surprise, wrapped in silence.

In silence I view for the first time, the new-born. She looks up: she seems to be judging me with serenely-wise scrutiny, with "eyes, deep as deep flowers, and dreamy like dim skies." Her hair is a dark, soft mass and her skin is pink and delicately shaded. As I stand, breathless and silent, a sudden, emotional admiration seizes me. In her tiny but potentially-capable fist she grasps my clumsy finger,—still looking at me with her crystal gaze. Then, gradu-

## Nine Years Ago

ally, her eyes close and with a little sigh, she sleeps.

Now I am anxious. Am I a disappointment? What she thinks of me this golden June day I cannot say. With a radiantly happy mother, I discuss—in whispers—the new-born's attitude.

Says she: "I wonder what the little dear really thinks of us?"

"Perhaps it is just as well for our vanity that we don't know," I reply.

As the weeks go by appearances in public begin to be made, and on these occasions, Bettina is always above reproach. But on one eventful Sunday afternoon comes her first visit to the Public Gardens,—and her first downfall from perfection.

In state and comfort lies Bettina

## Bettina Brown

among fleecy blankets, quietly enjoying the sunshine and the soft air, as we rest by the rippling lagoon. She even smiles gently at the beds of flowers. We are proud to be seen with such a model infant.

But, as we start to go home, Bettina suddenly lifts up her voice. To our amazement, her indignant protests assume a remarkable volume and energy.

Where did she get that VOICE? From what forgotten field-preacher or barn-storming rogue of a player descend those emotional yodels, those passionate outcries?

With increasing indignation, she spurns further vehicular locomotion; she has to be lifted from the carriage, and a shame-faced family hurry homeward. It is more than a retreat,

## Nine Years Ago

—it is a complete rout. We go in single file, headed by a blushing male carrying a protesting steam-calliope in his arms. Then comes the anxious and abashed mother, trailing a blanket, “in the alarm of fear caught up.” Bettina has shaken off her blankets, and now off goes a little white sock, which is rescued and returned by an amused passer-by. At the end of this happy procession is the nervous grandmother. She is pushing the patient baby in a skurrying, absent-minded way, and is pretending to smile.

Finally, breathless and perspiring, we gain our humble door, where, instantly,

“Silence, like a poultice, falls  
To heal the blows of sound.”



## Bettina Brown

Now that she is safely home, Bettina is calm, forgiving,—even gracious.

Days pass and I again venture abroad with Bettina,—but never again to the Gardens. She is too fond of that lovely spot.

It is a peculiarly unsettled summer with frequent chilly mornings, and we fret for the little one's comfort.

Her father may sometimes be seen seated by the kitchen-stove, holding in his ample lap a blanketed bundle of humanity. From out this bundle little pink feet are allowed to emerge to catch the warmth from the open oven-door. And Bettina is happy. Assuredly no king's daughter in house of ivory and gold is happier

## Nine Years Ago

than she, and the honest glow of the  
kitchen range seems as beautiful in  
her eyes as are the silent-footed rays  
of the yellow moon.

### III

#### NEW NEIGHBOURS

**M**Y business takes me so often to New York, that now, when Bettina is three months old, we decide to move there. I go ahead to spy out Flat-land and am fortunate in finding a home on a quiet uptown street.

It is a treasure of a flat, well up in the air, and commanding a fine view. From our West windows we can look out over a spacious convent garden and on to the noble Hudson beyond.

The convent itself is a rambling,

## New Neighbours

yellow wooden building which hides the garden from the street. It is the home of a French order of nuns. Their grounds are so close to our windows that Bettina has fallen heir to a multitude of delights. There are lofty trees with mysterious whispering leaves,—well-kept beds of old-fashioned flowers,—geranium, phlox, and larkspur, that proudly rear their brilliant heads, and strew the ground with fallen petals. ' Wind-ing paths, pebble-strewn, are to be seen; hens and chickens too, and a lordly rooster, and sometimes an an-cient horse. Against the yellow porch-columns roses are climbing, and to the bases of the trees circular wooden seats are fastened.

In this secluded beauty-spot, serene long-robed nuns take their recreation.

## Bettina Brown

They sit in the sunshine and read and sew, and are often seemingly absorbed in devotion. But there are days when they run and play. They play at childish games and are not afraid to laugh. Some of the sisters are very pretty, and all retain some trace of the inextinguishable Gallic charm.

To view the wonders of this garden little Bettina has to be lifted up a score of times each day and each time she gurgles and crows,—kicking her heels with delight.

These are glorious days for us and for her. Nothing happens, day after day goes by with only health and growth and cheerfulness. There are no midnight alarms, and no doctor's bills. Happy is the little tummy that has no history. Bettina is quite per-

## NEW NEIGHBOURS

fect. She is an energetic little queen and at her constant command are the interwoven services of her three alert subjects.

She holds our hearts in her sweet open hands.

## IV

### AFTER A YEAR

**F**OR Bettina's spirit of joyous serenity we older ones give credit neither to environment nor to our teachings. We credit it to an inherent endowment. In addition to cheerfulness is unsullied trustfulness. She has met with courtesy only,—has never been snubbed or teased. Our Bettina has philosophy too. Lest this word seem misplaced as applied to a baby, let me mention that almost the first word she learned to use was "Up."

Being a year old now, she is learning to walk, and often gets a fall.

## After a Year

The whole family rushes to dry the expected tears, but the little toddler looks merely surprised. She instantly stretches out her hands and ejaculates with booming energy, "B'up B'up." When she is placed upon her feet, the incident is closed,—she is ready for the next adventure.

Raised on fresh air, baths and sleep,—on love, praise, Santa Claus and Mother Goose, the child grows apace. Nothing is allowed to interfere with her mid-day nap. She retires for the night at a very early hour, and bed-time is always the time for romps and laughter, so that she does not dread the occasion, but loves it. Our little one is never turned over to the un-tender mercies of a servant. One of these elusive luxuries may care for the house,—but not



## Bettina Brown

for our most valuable treasure. We are hopelessly old-fashioned, I'll admit.

When in a great hurry, Bettina discards the perilous art of walking, and reverts to the primitive creep. If, when left alone for a moment, she hears us laughing in another room, that sound draws her instantly to us. We hear the quick pat-pat of soft baby-hands on the floor, and she launches herself into the midst of our group, looks up with eager enjoyment into our faces, saying, "Ahff! Ahff!" (laugh, laugh). She seeks happiness.

From the time she began to talk, my little friend has called me "Daddy" or "Bob,"—even "Bobby." But she always speaks of me as "Mr. Brown" when addressing an elevator

## After a Year

boy or other servant. What reasoning prompts this discrimination I cannot say. She has never been corrected for calling me "Bob" or "Bobby." Why should she be? I call her "Bettina" or even "Betty." She is surely more important in the world than I.—She is the Future.

She calls her grandmother "Dumdum." Why "Dumdum"? But then, why "dandindopper" for "coffee-grinder"? Why "bababees" for hens and chickens? Why "biddibut" for "petticoat"?

Bettina named her first three dolls, without perceptible hesitation, "Pan o' Constance," "Paradon," and "Miss Pimpus Bimbi." The "Miss" is always insisted on.

Do babies try to create a language of their own in their first struggles to

## Bettina Brown

be understood,—later giving up the attempt, finding it easier to learn the speech of grown-ups? Of one thing we may be sure,—they understand many of our words before they are able to form them with their own lips.

For example—Bettina at last is walking a little. I try an experiment without any hope of success. Very quietly and without pointing I say to her, “Please go to the table in the other room, get the box of matches and bring them to me.” To my great delight, this is done promptly and correctly.

Months go by and the words begin to flow. My! how she loves to talk. She even catches and uses slang. One day, upon hearing the name of the baby in the next apartment, she

## After a Year

says:—"Nora—bow-eggeg—Ain't it awpul, Mabel?" She thus expresses disapproval of Nora's bowed legs and quotes the versatile J. Hazzard.

Babyhood brings a constant series of surprising adventures. The little one lives in a wonder-land. There is a first time for everything,—a bird, a butterfly, a rose, a flash of lightning, a tree, a snow-flake, a fly. Bettina's first fly, or at least the first one she grows contemplative over, is an aggressive blue-bottle, a buzzing, scolding monster on the window-pane. Bettina admires the carrion-fed creature. She greets him enthusiastically, "Bit birt—bit birt—" which, being interpreted, means "a little bit of a bird."

Her first thunder-storm, fearlessly watched from a window, makes a

## Bettina Brown

tremendous impression. A sudden darkness comes, a rush of wind, carrying old papers and dust high up into the air. The river becomes troubled and black. We hear the booming thunder, and see the vivid play of lightning, with rain coming down in sheets. The benches on the Drive are drenched and deserted, and into side streets, and under every possible shelter, go hurrying groups of people.

Bettina keeps telling of this for many days, using almost the same words every time, "Many people awking (walking) on Drive—'ain—'ain—lady on seat—lady has on lavender dress—man running—mounted bee-spen (policeman) on a 'orse—" Then she goes and gets a toy horse-

## After a Year

man mounted on a noble steed to show the listeners. This is her first naming of a colour, and it is the gracious lavender.

## V

### LEARNING

**W**INTER is dead, and green-garbed Spring has invaded our neighbours' garden, conjuring to life the crocuses and tulips. The trees are vocal with the chirping and twittering of birds. From the convent-porch comes the Mother Superior, whose stern, intellectual face is stamped rulership and spiritual isolation. She is old and comes slowly along the path while the younger sisters fall silent as she passes.

Gradually into those tranquil, incomplete lives has come Bettina, the joyous. As the months have gone by,

## Learning

our gentle neighbours have learned to know the window where she may perhaps be seen and to watch for her in order to throw her half-furtive kisses. At length even the Mother Superior watches for and studies our merry little girl, and stops and smiles up at Bettina. She smiles and beckons and throws her womanly kisses with both her hands.

I hear of these happenings, but see little, discreetly keeping in the background.

In the course of time Bettina's mother meets one of the older nuns. This lady says that to her and her companions the daily sight of our baby is, as she expresses it, a "well of joy."

So already Bettina is exerting an



## Bettina Brown

influence, adding to the world's slender store of joy.

Time is bringing to light a great desire to learn. She has learned to walk and to talk. She makes up her mind that she shall know her letters. No one teaches them to her. All we do is to answer her questions. Her blocks are her primer,—her blocks, and the neighbourhood bill-boards. With Bettina in her push-cart, we pass a bill-covered wall. She spies a crooked S or a fat G, points it out, demanding, "What's dat?" The perambulator stops,—the desired information is given. There is a period of mental digestion, then Bettina signals that she is satisfied, and the procession moves on. This signal might be called a nod, but is more like a salaam. Her head and shoulders

## Learning

move forward energetically, her head almost touching her knees,—a salute to knowledge, perhaps.

The same questions are asked at home about her lettered blocks and one day, when I test her with the aid of a huge newspaper advertisement, I find, to my delighted surprise, that she can pick out all the twenty-six members of the letter family.

Next she learns the names of all the regular boats that pass daily up and down the river, past our windows. We hardly realise what she is doing,—why she keeps asking their names. It is almost a bore to us,—but she who must be obeyed exacts an answer. The little mind stows away the names, *Robert Fulton*, *Mary Powell*, the *Hendrik Hudson*, and many more.

## Bettina Brown

Soon she airs her knowledge. "Here comes the *Hendrik Hudson*," she cries. How can she tell? She can't read. At the window we strain our eyes, for the boat is still far up the river. We put on spectacles, or use a small telescope in order to read the name. Bettina is right—always. She is less than three years old.

## VI

### SAMBO AND A BIRTHDAY

**T**HERE is killing heat in the city. We take Bettina on day-trips to the beaches. One morning our destination is Staten Island. On the way we pass the Statue of Liberty. Already Bettina's is a mind "wax to receive and marble to retain."

On our return voyage, "Here it is again," we cry. "Who is that, Bettina?"

"The—(a little laugh)—the Mother Superior!"

Do I dare tell you that at this period, on seeing a stone that she had thrown go a surprising distance.

## Bettina Brown

rolling over and over down a hill,— she murmured, “That’s a Far Rock-away!” Learned writers assure us that punning is strictly an adult vice, unknown to childhood’s stainless hours. To prove to myself that the impossible is possible, I re-read Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s poem, “The Critic and the Owl.”

Prayer is too often not thankful praise, but only a form of fear. Bettina prays or not as she sees fit. She is not sent to bed as thousands of children are, night after night, with words of dread on their lips,—“If I should die before I wake—” Surely people could teach their little ones sensible prayers.

Even when under the influence of a mild epidemic of prayerfulness, Bettina shows knowledge of the value

## Sambo and a Birthday

of honourable scars, and of the exemptions due to the wounded. One day, while out playing, she slightly bruises her knee. That night at bedtime, we suggest that she kneel down to say a little prayer. (I know it may be wicked, but her prayers always amuse me.)

Bettina, however, crawls carefully into bed, meeting our proposition with cold scorn.

“What!” she says. “With *these knees!*”

But Sambo, the favourite doll, is often forced to kneel beside his bed and pray, which he does in a strained, guttural voice, Bettina being the ventriloquist. He is the oldest and ugliest of many dolls,—a grotesque darkey with a pained smile and a sad eye. His face wears a world-weary

## Bettina Brown

look that is almost human, and his head, mended innumerable times, is quite covered with black plaster. The hero of a hundred falls, he is treasured and is carefully dressed. "Dumdum" knits him warm sweaters and makes him neat little night-gowns,—in fact, a complete wardrobe. He has his own brass bed, his pipe, and even his eye-glasses.

Sambo is a great safety valve for Bettina. When she wants to say something impudent to her mother, the strained, guttural voice is assumed. Then, in her own tones she reproves Sambo, and punishes him with a spanking, or places him for hours in his high chair with his face to the wall.

This pampered little darkey has his own diminutive tree at Christmas,

## Sambo and a Birthday

and we all make him presents which Bettina carefully opens and looks at before examining her own, in spite of the fact that she has been dreaming and waiting for Christmas since Santa Claus' last visit.

One of Sambo's prayers, delivered through his self-appointed mouth-piece, runs this way:

"Nature made me,  
God takes care of me,—  
Heaven on earth,—I hope  
My head won't get broken again."

Bettina, as yet, cannot read. I think this annoys her, for she tries to deceive us by pretending to do so. She looks intently at an open book or newspaper and reels off the most astonishing pieces of information.

It is only four days before Christ-



## Bettina Brown

mas. Bettina has a big newspaper, and is reading aloud while we are all expected to listen quietly. She glances up occasionally to see if we are fooled and impressed. Her expression is serious and business-like. The quiet little voice goes on and on . . . . "Two tremense big worms—they went to row in the river—because—the Christmas bells grew—grew—to be a canoe—and all sorts of things. In the spring it always turns out to be Christmas bells,—in the summer— When Christmas comes nights I always wake up to see Santa Claus's white beard, and there he is putting toys all around and he doesn't see me because he is so busy putting toys on the floor. He is always sleighing his horses—because the whole house rang. And Christmas is

## Sambo and a Birthday

coming and always Mondays I cry with joy."

One of her Christmas presents is Dick, her first canary. The next day Bettina reads us an astonishing tale of cruelty.

"Once upon a time there was a little canary that died—and they had a little squirrel, and he was an awful little monkey, and he used to pull the canary's tail, and his feathers and his eye-brows, and he kind of pushed his eyes, and we had another bird and that same naughty squirrel,—he poked out that little bird's eye, out and in— And we had to buy another little canary and twenty more canaries and—and—twenty more cages, and the little squirrel kept pushing and pushing and he pushed out the eyes of the twenty canaries.

## Bettina Brown

So we had to buy twenty more canaries and twenty more cages and the naughty little squirrel—”

Just at this point the commissary department announces dinner. Fiction gives place to the realities,—else who can tell what myriads of feathered songsters might now lie, eye-less victims of that squirrel’s unrelenting cruelty?

Bettina travels along her happy path and reaches the age of five. She is proud of this birthday,—proud and even patronising. We go for a walk and pass a girl of eight or so—

“How do, little girl,” says Bettina. Amazed scorn wrinkles the face of the eight-year-old, and she walks

## Sambo and a Birthday

slowly away, casting indignant glances at the unconscious Bettina.

It is a beautiful June day. I sit and watch Bettina as she plays by herself. She keeps a sharp look-out for squirrels, and pauses to watch the home-building ants. The sight of a bird or a butterfly is an occasion for rapture.

Along the path comes another little toddler with azure eyes and honey-coloured hair. She is just about Bettina's age, and as I subsequently learn, her name is Wistaria. She is a darling. Her nurse sits on a near-by bench and sews.

The two children play apart for a while, but they cast sly glances at one another. Then Wistaria picks some grass and throws it in the air. Bettina does the same. Other

## Bettina Brown

startling feats are performed and faithfully copied,—always in absolute silence.

For a long time I sit and watch them. Finally I say: "Come, Bettina, we must go."

The children part without a word, but with their next meeting come greetings and embraces. An important friendship has begun between them.

Wistaria's nurse is a capable and intelligent German, who, while genuinely fond of her little charge, represents Teutonic lust for efficiency gone mad. Her idea seems to be that a child is sent into the world with one duty only,—to obey; a question is a sign of rebellion. Wistaria, who does not always obey, is subjected to constant penalties. One

## Sambo and a Birthday

of these is to sit quietly for varying lengths of time. Bettina respects those interruptions to their play, and often stops her own fun to sit by the culprit's side until the required time has passed.

One morning Wistaria has not eaten all the oatmeal served for her breakfast, and the cold mess is brought to the park to be finished there. The nurse is firm as a rock, and the child is full of tears and protests. Her bosom heaves,—or perhaps it is a rebellious little stomach. Bettina watches her quietly enough but with firm lips. She is always very polite to the nurse, and really likes her, I think. But what of her discipline? As we walk home I ask her.

“Would you have let Fräulein feed you that nice oatmeal?”

## Bettina Brown

Bettina fairly sputters with sudden indignation, "No, I would not!"

"But if she were your nurse you would have to eat it."

"I would—*not!*"

"What would you do?"

"I'd throw it in her face!" she answers without hesitating.

"Quite right, Bettina," I murmur softly. I catch a quick glance from the corner of Bettina's eye. I'm afraid that she has heard me.

To go back a little to the fifth birthday,—please believe that it is a perfect day for all of us. Our little one's sky is unclouded, and she is grateful. She has a charming habit of patting the shoulder of the one she loves. When tucked into her cool, wide bed that night, she gives many

## Sambo and a Birthday

of these caresses to her mother who leans over for a last kiss.

"I'm very satisfied with the way I'm beginning my life," she says, "a good bed—good food, and a good mother." Then, with a contented sigh, she adds, "I never had a sweeter birthday in my life,—or a happier one."



## VII

### PHILOSOPHER AND POET

**B**ETTINA has just returned from Sunday-school, and feels depressed. We decide that this must be her last day there. Her brief experience is a failure. The weekly lesson, or perhaps the influence of a gloomy teacher,—something gives for the first time a tinge of melancholy to that blithe spirit. I carefully record her running conversation this Sunday afternoon as she sits at her little table, cutting out paper-dolls:

“Life is so sad,—so sad . . . In a few years you will be dying. I had

## Philosopher and Poet

a little daughter once who got whooping cough and pneumonia and died. Her name was Rose Mary Isabella. Then there's wars. Suppose some of our friends were over in Turkey and got fought in the wars. Do you like to be told that you will die in a few years, Catherine? Do you hope that I won't die when I am a child? I hope *I'll* never die. Life is sad, isn't it? People have to work just the same. Bobby, you mustn't say 'ain't'! —I thought you were a good language-talker. Jesus was born in a stable with a horse. When he grew up he became a god. (Sings) 'Once in Bethlehem of Judea—' A god is a kind of angel, isn't he?—The saddest thing in the world is to see babies spanked. If I saw a woman spank-

## Bettina Brown

ing a little baby, I'd knock her down and kick her in the eye—"

Although amazingly fond of candy, Betty often lures me into a florist's instead of a confectionery shop. Fortunately for my pocket-book, our little friend is perfectly content with a single rose. No blossom dropped on the sidewalk is ever allowed to remain there, but, however faded or unattractive, its life must be saved. Home she trots, and the business of the household stops while she gets a drink of water for the dying flower.

Bettina loves words. She tries new ones, and asks their meaning. They gradually become part of her everyday speech. We rather sadly watch infantile mistakes depart; no longer

## Philosopher and Poet

does she say "scanned" for "scorned,"  
—"susperation" for "perspiration,"  
"tremense" for "immense," "dest"  
for "just,"—or "is" for "as." "I'm  
getting to be a big girl," she said on  
her fifth birthday, "I say 'perspira-  
tion' now."

She is beginning to dictate little  
verses to me,—a serious and careful  
business. Each word to be written  
just as she says it,—not a syllable  
changed. Here is one of her early  
efforts. It is "free verse" and thor-  
oughly modern in its spirit of social-  
istic discontent.

"The honey-bee makes honey  
And eats it himself,  
And give nobody it,  
And I don't get any."

## Bettina Brown

There's nothing particularly wonderful in that, is there? Yet, it came fresh from the brain of a child of five. Here is a decidedly cryptic "poem," dictated by her a few weeks earlier:

"The birds are singing in the cherry-tree—  
Singing till night and day—  
But I don't get up at that foolish time.  
I get up in the day."

What strange thoughts run through their little heads! Here is another dictated at the same period:

"The child that died in her sleep  
Had a nap in the afternoon;  
But oh! She was a baby—  
And sailed around the moon."

Bettina has already given up her afternoon nap,—otherwise the preceding might be considered as a protest against that practice.

## Philosopher and Poet

This one is another, chaotic:

"You're very kind to me, old dear—  
And that I will be guiled—  
And little one be dead for me,—  
It was hard for the child."

The following may be of interest,  
—a well-balanced outburst introducing  
the trees, the birds, the child, the  
father, mother and grandmother, and  
even Rose, the coloured servant:

"The little sparrows are singing high up  
in the tree,—  
So high are they up there—  
Up in the tree so high.  
And I seem to see and hear them up  
there,—  
A-singing, singing, away up in the tree-  
tops so high,—  
Gaily, gaily up there, happily, gaily, sing-  
ing so high—

## Bettina Brown

Why do they seem to be singing so happily  
this bright summer day?  
Little Bettina is watching the dear little  
birds,  
Up in the tree-tops so high—  
And Catherine with her,—  
And Bobby, and Dumdum along too—  
And Rose left at home,—doing her usual  
work,”

Betty is inconsolable; her doll, Paradon, one of the first of a family of eighteen, has had a disastrous fall and is beyond repair. This is a real tragedy, not to be borne with the usual sweet patience. What are a mother's personal troubles compared with the loss of a child? But the promise of a new doll finally makes Bettina dry her eyes. Then she bursts into song:

## Philosopher and Poet

"The little birds in the cherry-tree  
Are singing so nice and jolly,  
And chirping . . . chirping . . .  
In the cherry-tree  
And weeping . . . sadly it is raining . . .  
And little Paradon is dead . . .  
But I am not *is* sad *is* I was,  
For my good Dumdum  
Is going to buy me another doll,—  
And she is going to buy me a doll  
With yellow hair.



## VIII

### “SOMEWHAT OF A CRITIC”

**W**E Americans have been caught boasting of our morning cold bath, until silenced by the fierce competition of English discoverers of the American tub. The settled believer's enthusiasm cannot equal that of the proselyte. Anyway, we all exaggerate when we call it cold. It is really tepid, “just the chill taken off,” we say to our consciences. With Bettina it is different. She absolutely revels in water of icy coldness, and has to be literally dragged out of her bath.

“I love to see the fair waves float by my fair chest,” she once told me.

## “Somewhat of a Critic”

She is quite fond of the word “fair,” you see. It is used several times in this little “poem”:

“Roses,—roses are my favourites—  
Prettier than any plant—  
Water lilies, oh so fair—  
Or even thistles, oh so blue—  
Beautiful pinks of all kinds!—  
But nothing could be so pretty as roses.  
Roses, roses,—oh so fair—  
Nothing could be so pretty as a pair.”

This is hardly up to her standard and has a weak ending. However, recently she has made the acquaintance of a playwright, and her style may improve! Our neighbour, the playwright, has sent Bettina tickets to see his war-play, and she and her mother witness it with approval. The youngster immediately writes her

## Bettina Brown

thanks to the author,—addresses, stamps and mails the letter. By discreet espionage and diplomacy, I have obtained a copy.

*"My dear Mr. M——:*

*"Thank you very much for the tickets. I enjoyed the play very much. It is so kind of sad and yet funny in—spots. I was so glad when Captain Redmon and Miss Willoughby got away,—and the old German spy was killed,—the mean old thing! I am on the side of the Allies, aren't you? The Germans are so sneaky—when they sank the *Lusitania* they said she had guns on board!*

*"Please tell Mr. C—— that I think he is fine. With love,*

*"BETTINA BROWN."*

## “Somewhat of a Critic”

A kindly critic, she gives no fulsome praise, yet shows a scholarly and restrained appreciation. She exhibits perhaps a too decided race prejudice, but, unlike most critics, she gives some reason for her dislike.

Bettina's only knowledge of motion pictures has been gleaned from one travel lecture she attended, and a screen play based on “The Prince and the Pauper.” But her all-seeing eyes are ever busy. She passes a “movie” house, looks with absolute dislike at the febrile lithographs of battle, lust, murder, and sudden death,—and is heard to remark: “Now, if they would only have pictures showing kindness to horses and gentleness to kittens,—*that* would be good,—but not that *trash*.” Bravo! Bettina.

## Bettina Brown

Bettina has been taken by her mother to many art exhibits, and is a model spectator, especially since learning to read. She has her own catalogue, and studies it carefully, getting the numbers and titles. She has decided opinions. It seems to cause much amusement to see her gravely inspecting the different paintings. Occasionally she drifts away from her mother, and is found exchanging earnest opinions with a stranger,—usually an old gentleman with amused eyes. She absorbs some of the art-critic lingo. Once she said to her mother in an affected society tone, “How perfectly exquisite,—that picture,—with those gracious swans sailing among the lilies.”

At home one day, as she watched some corn being popped, she said:

## **"Somewhat of a Critic"**

**"You couldn't exactly call that 'still life,' could you?"**

**Her contempt for cubist and futurist efforts is complete, but she gives no outward sign in public, merely remarking:**

**"I'm glad that I have learned to laugh in my stomach."**

**There never was such a candid pair of eyes in the world as Bettina's, and she is very proud of her ability to "look down" any one of her family. This is a pet game of hers at dinner, —which meal in particular she regards as an occasion for jokes and cheerfulness. She looks serenely placid and immovable as her eyes are fixed upon us, one at a time, and she remains dignified and triumphant while the rest of us are forced to**

## Bettina Brown

laugh, the effect desired by Bettina. She "laughs inside" as she expresses it. This ability to laugh without facial betrayal is one of her most valued assets. How often she makes use of it, Heaven knows,—but no doubt her parents and her teachers afford much unsuspected mirth.

Do they ridicule us in their hearts, these infants? Bettina often says to me:

"Bobby,—you foolish old dear!" which I have regarded as merely an affectionate greeting; but perhaps that is her real opinion of me. I fear that she looks upon me as an amiable but erratic play-fellow who occasionally bullies her. Upon the assertion of parental authority she usually submits, but without humiliating loss of dignity. One nice thing

## “Somewhat of a Critic”

about our little girl is her readiness to forget trouble, and she never bears grudges. She may rebel and argue a bit, but when she submits, she does so cheerfully.

“Here! Here! I wouldn’t do that, Bettina.” A short pause,—then:

“Perhaps you are right, my friend.”

Bettina loves to turn the tables on her elders, and humble the teacher into a pupil. I have tried lately to improve her handwriting, but after giving her one or two lessons I find myself instructed and criticised.

“Sit still now, Bobby. Write ‘Sambo.’ Not *that* way! *I’ll* show you. *I’ll* show you, Bobby, my dear! Oh, I’m so disappointed in you!” And she murmurs to herself: “I’m so discouraged!” This is done with such



## Bettina Brown

apparent sincerity that I begin to regard my own careful handwriting with disfavour.

Like General Grant, Bettina's greatest desire is to have peace, but the subsequent use of satire is her revenge. I hear her in another room, on a chilly morning. She wants to wear half-hose. Her mother insists on long stockings, and, as calm as the face of a clock, has her way. There are sudden rebellious tears, and a short scene. Presently Bettina comes quietly to where I am. She has on her long stockings but to my surprise is as serene as a May morning.

"Catherine is quite a little joker, isn't she?" she murmurs.

Out they go for a walk, Bettina and her mother. In their ramblings,

## “Somewhat of a Critic”

they pass a lady and a little girl.  
The latter wears half-hose.

“Mamma,” says Bettina in her politest tones, “that little girl seems to have a very nice mother. I suppose this morning that the little girl said, ‘Please put on my long stockings,—’ and probably the lady said to her: ‘No, my dear,—I want *you* to look stylish!’ ”

## IX

### THEOLOGY AND JACK HORNER

**F**ROM Bettina's desire to learn there is no escape. She comes to me and says in a half-whisper:

"Daddy, I'm ashamed to say that I don't know all about the Bible."

My own youth was made somewhat uncomfortable by the over-strict religious atmosphere of my household. We have carefully avoided this tendency in Bettina's bringing-up. And yet, something seems to be pushing her, at least temporarily, into the bitter-sweet waters of theology. It may be some allusion met

## Theology and Jack Horner

with in a book, or the airing of superior biblical knowledge in a play-mate. Bettina is no longer content with the Lord's Prayer, the Golden Rule, and the simple story of the Christ-child; no longer satisfied with her own comforting creed with its trustful words:

"Nature will take care of you. Nature is up in the sky. It takes care of cuts and stings and bruises and flowers."

This morning Bettina greets me kindly and mentions as a matter of polite interest:

"Daddy, I said a little prayer last night. I asked God to make me a good girl and I told him if I wasn't, may all the curses of Hell fall upon me!"

## Bettina Brown

But what is "faith without works"? Bettina's animal spirits sometimes get her into trouble.

She sits on my right at dinner.

"You're a friend of mine, aren't you, Bettina?" I say, and put out my hand. Hers drops into it like a flower. This is a ceremony that we seldom omit.

"Daddy, I will not eat any of those despised, a c c u r s e d , abominable olives!" she proclaims.

Although Bettina's own table manners are not always above reproach, she is severely critical of young Jack Horner's.

"Wasn't that an awful table manner of Jack Horner to stick his thumb in a pie? I don't wonder they made him sit in a corner, if that's the kind of a table manner he had!"

## Theology and Jack Horner

Her mother draws a comparison, particularly deserved just at that moment, between Jack and Bettina.

The latter says with calm reproof:

"Catherine, you should not be so sarcasm." Her mother gives a soft answer but looks annoyed.

"Catherine, why this proudness?" asks Betty.

One thing leads to another. She is very naughty this particular evening. All her latent deviltry comes out. Finally there are tears. Bettina, feeling misunderstood, slips down under the table, and rocks to and fro, moaning to herself:

"Woe is me—woe is me—I wish God would make my life easier!" I leave for my club to avoid domestic responsibilities.

The next morning, Bettina, now

## Bettina Brown

perfectly serene and angelic, remarks to her grandmother:

"The fair night has soothed over poor Bettina's sore brow." Then she asks:

"Do you suppose Daddy went out last night because I was naughty? I suppose he said to himself: 'God—I'm glad I have a club!' "

She is so repentant and so angelic that I easily persuade her to dictate something for me. We call these dictations "Articles of Agreement," and we both formally sign our names at the end. Here is what she dictates to me, word for word:

"I do not see why people say 'he don't' and 'she don't.' They should say 'he doesn't' and 'she doesn't.'—We have had two servants this

## Theology and Jack Horner

month; they each stayed six days and Mamma had to help them both. Estelle was the worst we ever had—she ground the coffee and put the water on an hour too early. I do think she was the very worst servant we have ever been experienced in—she wore dirty looking old bedroom slippers on her feet and her smell was awful—Mamma is now without a maid—she works a little bit but I think it is good for her. Mamma makes a great fuss about working—that dear lady makes a great fuss about everything—I think ‘Experience’ is a very good play—I think Youth has the hardest part in all the play but Experience has the hardest part in talking—but Youth has to tumble down twice and I think he’d hurt his head—I like the dancing part and the beautiful music



## Bettina Brown

but I just despise and hate nasty, horrid old Poverty—awful thing—his face is ugly and he has only two teeth and he grins—awful—Song is beautiful and so is Pleasure and Fashion, but Beauty is not beautiful; Frailty uses bad grammar but she plays her part well—very—I liked the scenery also—‘Experience’ is a more lady-like play than the ‘Bluebird’—that’s more for children. I just loved Dick Deadeye in ‘Pinafore.’ I saw ‘Baby Mine,’ once, too—those two women were awful liars——

“And, Daddy, say that my Dum-dum dressed me in a very hurry this morning—And oh, say that I saw an opera once at the Metropolitan Opera House—All they did was to sing and kiss and weep and die——”

## X

### LETTERS AND LAUGHTER

**M**Y absence from home for the next ten months affected Bettina in an unexpected way. Not that her excitement instead of grief at parting surprised me; but the fact that as my absence was prolonged month after month her anxiety increased. I had feared that Time would bring forgetfulness, but, on the contrary, she misses me more and more and speaks of me oftener than at first.

"I don't see how I can stand the winter without Daddy," she says; "I'm afraid it will make me sick."

## Bettina Brown

"Isn't Daddy coming to our house any more?" she finally asks her mother.

Her education at home is bringing results. Within a few weeks she knows the sound of letters, and learns to read almost by herself. She has never used a primer, and soon she reads with ease. Before reaching the age of seven, she has read Frances Hodgson Burnett's "Secret Garden," and even Kipling's "Jungle Books." She asks questions about new words she meets, and surprises her family with carefully thought-out sentences.

Upon hearing of the way New York celebrates New Year's eve, she comments:

"Of course I don't want to grow up,—but there are some nice things

## Letters and Laughter

about it. I could enjoy the merri-  
ment of older people in a more ex-  
perienced way."

Being urged to write to me, she re-  
marks:

"Yes, I'll write to that dear lover.  
I mustn't neglect my family."

So she sends quaint, neatly written  
letters, always ending with pyramids  
of circles for kisses. In the following  
letter she is politely apologetic:

"I don't feel like writing very  
much. I just had a tooth pulled—I  
feel so proud—but I'll write a few  
lines—in this case if you'll excuse me  
I'll be ever so grateful."

She writes to me of her dancing-  
class and of how a friend, an old  
lady, came one day to see the children  
dance.

"I'm glad I asked her," she writes,

## Bettina Brown

"she's a very respectable woman."

Then in the same letter:

"I send more love and kisses than a million ships can hold."

Having given Sambo six little dolls, she christens them, "Upton Sinclair," "Emmeline Pankhurst," "Christobel Pankhurst," "Vincent Astor" and "John D. Rockefeller." She reads the newspapers and knows who is in the public eye. Of Sambo she writes:

"Although he is only a nigger, he is a good little mother;—he is so fond of his children."

Her mother's letters tell strange things; of Bettina, equipped with bow and arrow, trying to induce her grandmother to put a potato on her

## Letters and Laughter

head and let her shoot at it. She has been reading of William Tell.

Her mother comes into the room where the child is reading. The little monkey looks up and says:

"How fair you look, Catherine, with your beautiful ear-rings dripping down to your shoulders!"

Bettina comes in from a frolic on her sled, and claims to be "as cold as a fork when it comes out of the drawer."

Her grandmother has gone shopping, and the child inquires: "Where has she gone, that little wanderer?"

Dumdum is often scolded by her family for not eating enough. We fear for her health. Bettina has little patience with a person with a poor appetite, and has scolded her

## Bettina Brown

grandmother, saying on one occasion:

“Think, Dumdum,—think! Use your brain!” Afterwards she hovers about and softly pats her ancestor on the arm and says:

“I’m sorry I had to speak so bitterly to you.”

She lifts Sambo from his lazy slumbers, and says with mock emotion,—“And her beautiful eyes softened as she gazed at him.”

When eating some candy, she pauses and remarks, “On her fair face are looks of happiness and joy.”

These are high spots. Her usual talk is plain and direct enough. Our maid is in the kitchen trying to coax Dicky to sing. Bettina calls out:

## Letters and Laughter

"For Goodness sake, Ellen, tell him to lay an egg. As long as he doesn't sing, he must be a hen-bird."

She has taken a violent dislike to Theodore Roosevelt, her only explanation being:

"I don't like the expression on his face. Does he always look that way?" I am powerless to console her.

Finally, South America gives up its grip on me, and I come back to a quiet but hearty welcome from Bettina. Arriving, bronzed as an Indian, a few hours ahead of time, I come upon her suddenly on the street. She is walking with her mother, to whom she afterwards confides:

"At first I hardly knew the old duffer."

For days following, she hangs



## Bettina Brown

around me, hardly allowing me out of her sight. She clings to my arm, sits on my knee, pats my face, gives me sudden little hugs and affectionate words. Once when I am talking to her mother, Bettina calls out to me:

“Bobby—will you come here and talk to me? Bobby! Bobby! You haven’t a prettier thing to your name than your little daughter Bettina.”

Bettina is rather pleased with herself. She often looks at her reflection in the mirror and for her own pleasure, puts flowers in her hair, and adorns herself with coloured beads and scarfs. She is at the age of “sanguine, groundless hopes and that lively vanity which makes up the happiness of life.”

A child gets its vocabulary from

## Letters and Laughter

the people and books around it. If it never hears a coarse word, it surely can't use it. We solely are responsible for the words which impress themselves on the little minds. The child gathers the purple "damn" or the lurid "hell" from even the best family paper or magazine, and if these expressions crop out occasionally no harm is done, unless the little one is made to feel that what is merely an offence against good taste is a crime.

Bettina's occasional use of the word "damn," while adding force and piquancy to her conversation, is quietly ignored, and is therefore disappearing. The fact that she gives it two syllables, "dām-en," and a long "a" is a complete alibi for her by no means faultless father.

## Bettina Brown

To-day—we walk down to the river-edge, instead of to the park or the drive. This is a rare treat for Bettina, and she is overjoyed. She throws stones in the water tirelessly and wants to stay till after sunset, to see how the river looks at night. This being out of the question, she pretends to be too weary to walk home. While we are exerting diplomacy, each in his own fashion, I find myself listening to a conversation between two boatmen. One of them is boasting of his father:

“Powerful strong hands father had.—Used to go up in the riggin’ and put his back to the mast and hang on to a rope with his left hand—He’d close his eyes and pretend to be asleep,—just clung there like a bat, by the hour. Talk about miracles,

## Letters and Laughter

the blessed saints in their palmiest days never equalled that—powerful strong hands father had—I tell you—by G——!”

“Come, Betty—I think we’d better go.” I pull her away and as we walk homeward I ponder on the ways of fishermen—

“Sounded just like a fairy-story, didn’t it, Daddy?”

“It *was*, my child, it *was*.”

## XI

### ETHER AND ROSES

**B**ETTINA has an experience. She is now seven, and, although her health is otherwise quite perfect, a slight operation on her throat is found necessary by the family doctor. Here is her account of the ordeal, as she writes it in her often neglected diary:

March 1st, 1915.

I am going to the hospital to-morrow.

March 3rd, 1915.

I had my tonsils out yesterday. Daddy came over and brought me some roses.

## Ether and Roses

The following is from my diary:

Bettina hears she must go to the hospital, and she has worn her nurse's cap and apron all day. She says: "Am I dreaming? Or am I really going to the hospital and lie in a little white bed and have a real nurse come in and look me in the eye?"

The operation will take only eighty seconds, so they say. The little monkey, instead of being scared, seems pleased and excited. She is going to take Sambo, the battered darkey. Her only regret at going seems to be that she will have to forgo her usual whist for that day.

March 2nd.

I went to hospital at five—found her in spotless room, &c. She, the irrepressible, actually looked subdued. Has some colour in her cheeks. She

## Bettina Brown

greet me politely, but, of course, silently, and winks. Most gracious about the roses I brought,—painful to talk, yet—quite the hostess as she always is. I really believe the wonderful child regards her mission in life as that of a hostess, and her family as her guests. As I said “Good-bye” to her, she murmured, “Comfort dear old Dumdum.”—

March 3rd.

Bettina arrived home at noon—can’t talk much, says she will make up for it later;—I believe her! I learn that when the child was left alone for a minute, she started off alone in her little night-gown, bound for the operating-room. When she was placed on the operating-table, and saw the white-robed and white-capped nurses and the doctors, she sat

## Ether and Roses

up and looked them all over, remarking: "C'est très drole!" to their great amusement,—then she quietly sniffed the anæsthetic.—To-day she described her sensations, which she evidently analysed at the time—

"Daddy, it's funny—when I first smelled that stuff I felt cold in my throat—then my arms and legs were paralysed—but I could still hear—then my head fell right over—"

Dr. F—— said in her presence to-day, "Do you mean to say that child is only seven years old? I've never seen such poise!" Betty quietly murmured: "Why flatter the infant?"—and in speaking of her hospital experience she remarks:

"Those doctors praised me until I nearly burst with conceit."



## Bettina Brown

In a few days, when it is no longer painful for her to speak, the pent-up thoughts come forth like water from a broken dam. Her relief is so great that she throws all restraint to the winds:

“Bettina,” I say warningly, “you are going to get into trouble.” She is unimpressed.

“Ah—let what *will* come, come! Am I not the bravest little maiden in the world?”

She still runs to meet me when I come home in the evening, and feels in my pocket for some little trifle.

“What bringest thou from thy long journey?” is one of her greetings. But these phrases differ day by day. She seldom repeats herself. What a

## Ether and Roses

difference from those baby days when her limited vocabulary made the question always the same:

“What did bought for I?”

## XII

### THE LUSITANIA

**N**EXT to Santa Claus, His Majesty King Albert of Belgium is the object of Bettina's warmest adoration. Her great ambition in life is to be a trained nurse and have a chance to attend on that monarch. She imagines him wounded and herself skilfully soothing his regal brow:

"The King of Belgium," she has been heard to say, "is just *full* of royal blood!"

Since then I have only pictured him as on the point of bursting from sanguinary pressure.

## The *Lusitania*

Bettina has also often expressed a desire to be a ballet-dancer if she should not become a nurse. My efforts to convince her of the hardships of either of these two professions fall on deaf ears. To wean her thoughts from pirouetting, we have bought her a nurse's outfit, child's size,—apron, cap, and red-cross badge. These are all immediately donned at any symptom of sickness in the house. Once her mother was taken alarmingly ill in the night. Bettina appeared among us, explaining that "she could not feel *reconciled* to staying in bed at such a time." However, she had delayed long enough to put on her nurse's apron and cap!

Her out-spoken admiration for King Albert carries with it a fierce anti-German attitude. She gnashes

## Bettina Brown

nacreous teeth at the mention of the Kaiser, and plans slow, cruel tortures for him. And she is entitled to her opinion.

It is the day of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. I have come up from Wall Street, shocked at the tragedy and smarting from pecuniary losses. My fleece is hanging in tattered shreds.

“Why put on such a doleful countenance, Bobby-boy?” is Betty’s greeting. I tell her what I can of the mysterious and deadly attack on the stately ship, with its terrible loss of life, no one knows as yet how great. At first I do not speak of my personal losses, but as we talk, I impulsively tell of them. Bettina is always an absolutely safe confidant.

## The *Lusitania*

"But how did you lose all that money?" she asks.

"You see, I was trading on margin——"

"What's 'margin'?"

"You only pay down a small part of what the stock cost. Just as if I should buy a piece of land and only pay part at first in hopes that the land would increase in value."

"Does it, Daddy?"

"Yes, my dear,—after you have sold it."

"Oh——"

"Well about my stock—Along comes a panic——"

"What's a panic?"

"People lose their heads and are afraid, or else have no more money to pay down, so they have to sell their stock for whatever they can get. I

## Bettina Brown

lost One Hundred and Eighty Thousand Pennies."

"Oh, Bobby!" gasps Bettina, thoroughly impressed.

"Yes, my dear—I can't afford it. I am a fool."

Bettina takes this statement under consideration, and then says with conviction:

"Yes,—you *are* a fool." No disrespect is intended. My associate judge has merely concurred in my opinion.

All too soon come hideous details of the ocean tragedy. I meet on the street an old acquaintance, who is justly celebrated for scholarship and for public spirit. His kindly eyes have no humour in them to-day as he abruptly asks:

"Well—what do you think of it?"

## The *Lusitania*

"I can't think. I am stunned," I reply.

"*There were forty babies on that boat,*" he says slowly. We look steadily into each other's eyes. There is nothing more to be said. We part, forgetting even to say "Good-bye."

When I arrive home I find Bettina reading the latest newspaper. There are tears in her eyes. She speaks sadly of the dead babies, and bitterly of their murderers. The finger of the noted publicist and the finger of the little child,—both point to the same unforgivable sin.



## XIII

### SCHOOL AND CLEOPATRA

**O**N this sun-lit afternoon, the odour of incense floats in through our open windows. The silences are broken by crisp-toned bells. Under the trees of our neighbours' garden are white-veiled little girls whose communion dresses mingle with the sombre robes of the nuns. In slow processions the children are guided along the winding paths to the foot of a noble tree where stands a flower-decked shrine to the Virgin. We hear chants and prayers and the silver-sounding bell. Beauty is at our very window-sill.

## School and Cleopatra

We are going to say good-bye to our neighbours, the good nuns. Our little Bettina, now eight years old, is going to school in the fall. Thanks to her home teaching, she will "skip" the first four years and enter a high grade in the seemingly ideal private school which we have selected for her,—an institute where very small classes give hope of more individual freedom than the usual school can allow. We are too far away, and so must move many blocks southward,—away from our little flat and far from the nuns' garden. In that peaceful spot Bettina has spent many charming hours this last year, improving her French by conversation with one of the sisters.

Time passes. We have moved in-

## Bettina Brown

to a pleasant roomy apartment and, more important still, Bettina goes to school.

We afterwards learn that it is some weeks before our lively child acquires real school-manners. At first she gives her teachers many shocks, and her little schoolmates much amusement, by innocently rising, from time to time, and walking around the room to stretch her legs, gazing out of the window, or even talking whenever the spirit moves her,—as has always been her habit. The children in her class, most of them started in the kindergarten, are much diverted by the unconventionality of their new comrade's behaviour. However, she soon settles down, although the principal (and head teacher) calls her

## School and Cleopatra

"Quicksilver," a word which fits her alert mind as well as her eager little body.

Bettina has learned that it is blessed to give, and has contributed from her own scanty funds toward the support of a French war-orphan and even wants to send some dimes to the hospital where she was treated so well. She makes me little presents now,—sometimes a few flowers.

"I have purchased these fair blooms for you," she said one day.

At her urgent request I take her to the woods one unseasonably hot morning in May. She has heard of a pond where there are little turtles, and she has made up her mind to find one. I have little faith in the success

## Bettina Brown

of this strange quest, and after we had circled the pond and walked over swampy places in the broiling sun, my lagging gait betrays my weariness. Then comes a soft cheering voice at my elbow:

“Courage, old fellow—let us trudge a little further.”

On we go and finally, to her great joy and my relief, we actually see and capture a turtle! Bettina does the actual work, sliding fearlessly down a slippery bank and seizing him. Home we go in triumph.

This new member of our family is not much larger than a quarter, but is a friendly little chap. He loves to be held in one's hand far out of the window, and lies there gazing with apparent interest at the street below,

## **School and Cleopatra**

**his eyes following the movements of people and vehicles. No pleasanter pet could be desired. Bettina has named him "Cleopatra."**

## XIV

### LAST WORDS

**B**ETTINA, at this writing, has just passed her ninth birthday, but is still, in many ways, very much of a baby. One finds in her a curious mixture of unusual mentality and childish unreasonableness. Her first year at school is over and although the youngest by far in her class, she has constantly maintained her place at the head. Yet she still believes in Santa Claus;—in fact, I more than suspect that she even prays to him sometimes.

At her request I have recently given her a copy of "Huckleberry Finn."

## **Last Words**

She almost weeps when she sees the final chapters approaching, but is partially consoled by an abridgment of Benjamin Franklin's autobiography! Yet she still spends many hours with her first loves, Grimms' "Fairy Tales" and "Swiss Family Robinson." She keeps well posted on the latest news of this horrible war, but still cries over "Black Beauty" and the untimely death of poor Cock Robin.

Betty correctly prompts me when I try to name the unfortunate wives of Henry the Eighth, or the capital of Venezuela, and has a very good working knowledge of French, of which I know nothing.

When Bettina was a helpless baby and had everything to learn, she would reach out to grasp the moon.



## Bettina Brown

Distance meant nothing to her. Now she is getting an inkling of astronomy and of the boundless spaces of the sky. I boast no more, in her presence, of my travels. For one day, when, in half-jesting mood, I exclaimed: "I have seen *everything!*" she silenced me with the retort:

"Did you ever see a star close-to?"

Miss Homer nods occasionally (glory be!) just to keep me in countenance. Only recently when asked to use the word "campaign" in a sentence, she, recognising its connection with soldiers and war, announced with confidence, "The soldiers drank a lot of campaign." In a recent letter she speaks of hearing some "exquisite selections" on a Victrola and ends, "And Alma Gluck sang 'Way Down on the *Swan E. River!*' "

## Last Words

When she feels like it, my little daughter plays a really good game of Whist, grasping many subtleties of the game, and even Bridge has no terrors for her; but she must have a certain chair and a certain cushion at her back.

"I'm so luxurious," she explains.

Yet she's tireless when there's a steep hill to climb or a race to run; fearless in the water as a duck, diving, floating and swimming beyond her depth, using long, confident strokes.

Latin is one of her favourite studies at school, yet she still plays with her dolls. She prefers Jack-straws to Whist, beats me over and over again at Checkers, laying traps for me and giving me Judas-like advice as to my moves. She refuses to use the black

## Bettina Brown

men. She is a slave to precedent and it is hard to change her "little ceremonials."

From the sea-shore comes her weekly letter. "Daddy," she writes, "I was stung to-day by a stingaree when we were over by the boat. It stung awfully, like a million, sharp, prickly, little needles." Then she tells of having seen "a darling, sweet, precious, little bit of a puppy." She longs for some real home-made cake. Says she is tired of the "artificial cake" at the hotel.

I wrote her the other day and told her of the tranquil death of her pet canary. My wife's letter informs me that Bettina received the news with apparent calm, but turned away and was quiet for a long time; then was heard softly and slowly humming

## Last Words

*Chopin's Funeral March.* Later she proved herself the possessor of a sense of proportion by remarking, "Whenever I am too sad, I think of poor Lord Kitchener."

Here's part of her last letter: "I have learned a new stroke, or rather a new stunt in the water. I only tried it to-day. I tried it with a stone. The stunt is to swim with one arm and hold the other arm high and dry out of the water. I swam way back from the raft that way to-day, and kept the rock perfectly dry. Yesterday I fell over a man's leg and bruised my knee slightly. I put peroxide on it and it smarted like the deuce (excuse the word).

"Love and kisses,

"BETTY."

## Bettina Brown

While I wait for her return, I solace myself by recalling other days. In particular I cherish a pretty conceit of hers, a poem in itself, which two years ago she confided to me in a half-whisper, while arranging some pansies in a bowl. She has a method of her own, turns each blossom to catch its expression, pats, loves and arranges the face-flowers with affectionate skill.

"Daddy," she said, "I think flowers are the friendliest things in the world, don't you?"

**THE END**





345 West 85th..1917.  
NEW YORK  
November 30th. '17..

George H. Sargent Esq.  
Boston Transcript,

Dear George: I am asking Messrs. E. P.  
Dutton & Co. to send you a copy of a little  
book of mine called "BETTINA BROWN" It comes  
under the head of Juveniles, but will also  
interest parents, I think. The opening char-  
acters are laid in Boston.

Anything that you can do  
awaken interest in this, my first effort, will  
be greatly appreciated.

With regards to Mrs. Sargent,

Your friend,

*Ben. Johnson*











